



Looking for a new participant. The purepecha passive

Claudine Chamoreau

► To cite this version:

Claudine Chamoreau. Looking for a new participant. The purepecha passive. Zarina Estrada Fernandez, Soren Wichmann, Claudine Chamoreau, Albert Alvarez Gonzalez. Studies in Voice and Transitivity, Lincom, pp.125-143, 2007. halshs-00293364

HAL Id: halshs-00293364

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00293364>

Submitted on 4 Jul 2008

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Looking for a new participant. The Purepecha passive^{*}

CLAUDINE CHAMOREAU

Centre for Indigenous American Languages Research (CELIA)
CNRS-IRD-INALCO-PARIS VII

1. Introduction

Purepecha¹ has a suffix *na* (or *ɲa*, dialectal variation) whose presence has the following consequences: (i) the valence of the verb is reduced, i.e., the construction contains one participant less than the corresponding form without this element; (ii) the patient of the transitive or the recipient/source of the ditransitive function as the subject of the clause; and (iii) the expression of an agent is generally not possible.

In other languages, such features have been described as characteristics of affixes that encode the passive voice (Keenan 1985; Lazard 1986; Shibatani 1985). In Purepecha, the suffix *na* was identified by Monzon (2004) as a ‘general agent’, by Foster (1969) as an ‘indefinite agent’, by Friedrich (1984) as a ‘plural subject’, and as a ‘passive or impersonal’ by Gilberti (1987 [1558]), Lagunas (1983 [1574]), Swadesh (1969), Nava (2004), and Chamoreau (2005). Each designation not only reveals different facets of the values assumed by this element, but also shows paths to understanding its evolution. In the 16th century, it was only described as an ‘indefinite plural agent’ (Chamoreau 2005). The introduction of a nominal agent was not possible. Currently, an evolution that leads to the possible presence of a noun phrase that expresses a particular agent does exist.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the reorganization in the introduction of the sole participant in intransitive constructions and the agent in transitive and ditransitive ones.

Clauses exhibiting *na* are frequent not only in narratives but also in oral discourse and are used in very specific contexts where there is no interest in identifying the agent. Thus, *na* serves to suppress the agent (Shibatani 1985:832)—either as a voluntary discourse strategy or motivated by the inability to identify the agent at the moment of communication.

The aim of this paper is twofold: (i) To study the morphosyntactic properties, specifically the subject in both active and passive constructions. These properties are conveyed whatever the valence of the verb and the semantic role of the element that carries out the function of the subject (section 2). (ii) To analyse the different strategies developed by the language to deal with the introduction of an element essential for communication, the agent, in a structure that is basically formed to eliminate it. This introduction is organized differently depending on the valence of the verb. On one hand, in transitive and ditransitive verbs, the agent is introduced as an oblique with the instrumental case marker or postposition. This strategy is quite common in different languages, however, in the

varieties of Purepecha, the use of the instrumental in such construction offers different values (i.e. instrumental, agent) (section 3). On the other hand, in intransitive verbs, which never present a nominal subject in passive construction, the participant introduced as a noun phrase is generally placed after a clause. This noun phrase lacks the characteristics of a subject in Purepecha. Therefore, it functions as an element that fulfils a fundamental role on a pragmatic level called *precision phrase* (section 4).

2. Main characteristics of the subject in Purepecha

The main morphosyntactic characteristics of the subject, an element that obligatorily determines the verb, will be presented in the following section. I shall analyze the behavior of the subject both in the active and passive voices.

2.1 Personal subject

Purepecha has two distinct paradigms of person markers: pronominal enclitics and independent pronouns. The first type is constituted by elements that can appear on a verb or on a constituent placed before the verb. Such elements have lesser pragmatic importance in contrast to the independent pronouns (Chamoreau 2003a). Verbs are obligatorily marked for mood. The most frequent is the assertive mood, which is encoded by a portmanteau element marking person in addition to mood: For instance, *ti* indicates assertive mood and third person, and *ka* expressed assertive mood and first and second persons. A verb conjugated in the assertive mood can function as a complete sentence.² Clauses in which only *ti* appears are interpreted as third person singular, cf. (1) and those in which only *ka* appears are interpreted as first person singular (2). The pronominal enclitic of third person singular is \emptyset , the same as for the first person singular, although in the second case the form \emptyset alternates with the element *ni* (2). Nevertheless, in order to avoid ambiguities that could arise from these polysemic units, a pronominal enclitic or an independent pronoun is generally used.

- (1) *waʔa-f-ti*
dance-AOR-ASS3
'S/he/it danced.' (Jaracuaro-Celia2, 82)³
- (2) *iʃe-f-ka-(ni)*
see-AOR-ASS1/2-(1)
'I saw her/him/it.' (Jaracuaro-Celia1, 307)

In order to indicate other persons it is necessary to introduce an independent pronoun or a pronominal enclitic. Depending on pragmatic contexts one can introduce only a pronominal enclitic only, cf. *kʃi* in (3), an independent pronoun, *thu* in (4) or a combination of both, cf. *xuʃa* and *kʃi* in (5). Pragmatically, these last two function to call attention to the subject. The behaviour is the same, independent of the valence of the verb, intransitive (1, 5), transitive (2, 3), or ditransitive (4).

- (3) *pyá-a-f-ti-kfɪ* *tsɪma* *tsɪtsɪki-itʃa-ni*
 buy-3PL.OBJ-ASS3-3PL DEM.PL flower-PL-OBJ
 ‘They bought these flowers.’ (Jaracuaro-Vida19, 38)
- (4) *xo* *thu* *mó-tha-ku-a-a-ka* *ʃukupɔʔakwa-itʃa-ni*
 yes 2IND change-lateral-3APPL-3PL.OBJ-FUT-ASS1/2 clothes-PL-OBJ
 ‘Yes, you will change the clothes to him.’ (Jaracuaro-kurits1, 26)
- (5) *xutʃa* *ampa-tsɪ-f-ka-kfɪ*
 1PL.IND clean-head-AOR-ASS1/2-1PL
 ‘We have brushed our hair ourselves.’ (Jaracuaro-Vida6, 295)

In the passive voice, a clear distinction at the level of verbs can be observed between, on one hand, transitive and ditransitive verbs, and on the other, intransitive verbs. The former can occur with all persons, not the latter. In the active transitive construction in (6a), the third person subject is expressed by *ti* and the object by the pronominal enclitic *kini*. In (6b), a passive construction that corresponds to (6a), only a subject, the pronominal enclitic *ri* is attested. Semantically, in (6b), the subject is a patient.

- (6) Active
 a. *ife-f-ti-kini*
 see-AOR-ASS3-2OBJ
 ‘S/he/it saw you.’ (Jaracuaro-Celia1, 310)
- Passive
 b. *ife-na-f-ka-ri*
 see-PASS-AOR-ASS1/2-2
 ‘You were seen.’
 ‘They saw you.’ (Jaracuaro-Celia1, 452)

The example in (7a) shows an active ditransitive construction with three arguments: a subject *xi* ‘1IND’, and two objects, a patient *tumina* ‘money’ and a source *a* ‘3PL.OBJ’. The example in (7b) is a passive construction that corresponds to (7a) with two arguments the subject *kfɪ* ‘3PL’ which is semantically a source and the object, *tumina* which is semantically a patient.

- (7) Active
 a. *xi* *ʃɪpa-a-f-ka* *tumina*
 1IND steal-3PL.OBJ-AOR-ASS1/2 money
 ‘I stole money from them.’ (Jaracuaro-ladron3, 78)
- Passive
 b. *ʃɪpa-na-f-ti-kfɪ* *tumina*
 steal-PASS-AOR-ASS3-3PL money
 ‘They were robbed of money.’ (Jaracuaro-ladron3, 95)

(8a) shows an active intransitive construction. The subject is the third person expressed by *ti* (assertive mood plus third person). (8b) is a passive construction. This construction can only occur in the third person singular.⁴

(8) Active

- a. *ni-ra-s-ti* *paskwaɽu*
 go-FT-AOR-ASS3 Pátzcuaro
 ‘He went to Pátzcuaro.’ (Jaracuaro-Celia39, 71)

Passive

- b. *ni-na-s-ti* *paskwaɽu*
 go-PASS-AOR-ASS3 Pátzcuaro
 ‘One/somebody went to Pátzcuaro.’ (Jaracuaro-vida2, 92)

It is not possible to introduce another person, for example the second person in (9a) or the third person plural in (9b). This is the reason why the absence of any person marking may be understood as the third person singular.

- (9) a. **ni-na-s-ka-ri*
 b. **ni-na-s-ti-kfɨ*

2.2 Nominal subject

Purepecha is a case-marking language in which the nominal subject is indicated by a zero marker, whereas the object is expressed through the case marker *ni*. The presence of the object case depends on different hierarchies: (i) inherent properties of the element (human, animate, etc.); (ii) properties related to grammatical features (defined, collective, generic, etc.); and (iii) pragmatic strategies (topic, focus). These hierarchies are created as complementary degrees: in (10), a definite human nominal carries the object case marker *ni* whereas in (11a), an indefinite animate can appear without the object case marker (Chamoreau 1999).

- (10) *waɽiti ife-f-ti nanaka-ni*
 woman see-AOR-ASS3 girl-OBJ
 ‘The woman saw the girl.’ (Jaracuaro-Celia15, 185)

- (11) a. *waɽiti ife-f-ti ma misitu*
 woman see-AOR-ASS3 a cat
 ‘The woman saw a cat.’ (Jaracuaro-Celia96, 23)

Generally, in order to identify the subject in sentences like those in (11a), four tests may be applied:

A. Case marker

The subject case is indicated by a zero marker, contrasting with the object case marker *ni* (10). If the non-human nominal object in example (11a) is exchanged for a human nominal such as *ma nanaka-ni* ‘a girl’, the object case marker appears (11b).

- (11) b. *waɽiti ife-f-ti ma nanaka-ni*
 woman see-AOR-ASS3 a girl-OBJ
 ‘The woman saw a girl.’ (Jaracuaro-Celia15, 190)

B. Subject agreement in the assertive mood

As mentioned earlier, agreement between verbs and subjects is expressed by mood markers. A comparison between (11a) and (12a) shows how the marking varies according to person of subject. In contrast, a change in the object does not give rise to a change in the mood, cf. (12b).

(12) Active

- a. *xi ife-f-ka ma misitu*
 1IND see-AOR-ASS1/2 a cat
 ‘You saw a cat.’ (Jaracuaro-Celia96, 40)
- b. *waṛiti-rini ife-f-ti*
 woman-1OBJ see-AOR-ASS3
 ‘The woman saw me.’ (Jaracuaro-Celia15, 178)

Subject agreement is seen in both the active and passive voices. In (12a), *misitu* has the function of object but in the passive construction (13a) it has the function of subject. The assertive mood agrees with the subject of the third person in (13a). In the active construction in (12b), the pronominal enclitic of the first person *rini* expresses the object. In (13b), the first person is the independent pronoun *xi*, which is the subject and shows a correlation with the assertive mood.

(13) Passive

- a. *misitu ife-na-f-ti*
 cat see-PASS-AOR-ASS3
 ‘The cat was seen.’ (Jaracuaro-Celia96, 90)
- b. *xi ife-na-f-ka*
 1IND see-PASS-AOR-ASS1/2
 ‘I was seen.’ (Jaracuaro-Celia96, 79)

From examples (12) and (13), we can establish that: (i) the patient of the active transitive (syntactically the direct object) corresponds to the subject of the passive construction, in conformity with the normal behavior of so-called ‘promotional’ passives (Givón 2002; Shibatani 1985); and (ii) in the passive construction, the verb is intransitive, its valence having been reduced.

In the ditransitive construction in (14a) the subject *Tsɨtsɨki* agrees with *ti*, the assertive mood marker. In (14b) the subject is represented by the pronominal enclitic of second person *ri* and the object by the pronominal enclitic *rini*. The change in subject between (14a) and (14b) causes a modification of the element: the assertive mood plus the first and second person *ka* is used. In (14c), the object is the third person demonstrative *ima-ni*, the change in object (between 14b and 14c) does not modify the form of this element.

(14) Active

- a. *Tsɨtsɨki aɾi-ʃa-ti ma ʃɪpati ama-mpa-ni*
 tsɨtsɨki say-PROG-ASS3 a secret mother-3.POSS-OBJ
 ‘Tsɨtsɨki is telling a secret to her mother.’ (Cocucho-MariaElena1, 26)
- b. *mameni-rini kuɾa-ʃɪ-ʃɪn-ka-ri itʃuskuta*
 always-1OBJ ask-1/2APPL-HAB-ASS1/2-2 tortilla
 ‘You always ask me for tortillas.’ (Jaracuaro-Celia3, 82)
- c. *mameni kuɾa-ku-ʃɪn-ka-ri itʃuskuta ima-ni*
 always ask-3APPL-HAB-ASS1/2-2 tortilla DEM-OBJ
 ‘You always ask him for tortillas.’ (Jaracuaro-Celia3, 140)

In (15a), only the direct object of ditransitive active construction, *tataka sapitʃu-itʃu* ‘the children’ can become the subject of a passive construction. Semantically, the direct object corresponds to the recipient while the semantic patient *wantantskwa thaletskwa-itʃa-iri* ‘the story about the elves’ cannot become the subject (15b).

(15) Passive

- a. *tataka sapitʃu-itʃa aɾi-na-ʃa-ti-kʃɨ wantantskwa thaletskwa-itʃa-iri*
 boy little-PL say-PASS-PROG-ASS3-3PL story elf-PL-GEN
 ‘The children are being told the story about the elves.’ (Zipiajo-duende1, 73)
- b. **wantantskwa thaletskwa-itʃa-iri aɾi-na-ʃa-ti-kʃɨ tataka sapitʃu-itʃu-ni*

From these examples, it can be deduced that: (i) the recipient/source function as the subject of a passive in a ditransitive construction (Chamoreau 2003b:62–77). Syntactically, the object of the ditransitive construction that aligns with the object of the transitive one—independent of its semantic role—is the direct object (Chamoreau in press). This feature supports the description of this strategy as a ‘promotional’ passive. It abides by Givón’s generalization about promotional passives (1997:22). According to this author, if the subject of the passive clauses is restricted to the direct objects of the corresponding active clauses then there is probably a promotional passive; and (ii) in passive, a ditransitive construction reduces its valence, i.e. it is transitive.

In intransitive verbs we can also observe the correlation between subject *kwhiripu* and the assertive mood *ti* in (16a) as well as between the subject pronoun *xi* and the assertive mood *ka* in (16b).

(16) Active

- a. *aʃa-etʃa waʃa-me-ʃ-ti*
 man-PL sit-liquid.MID-AOR-ASS3
 ‘The men sat in the water.’ (Pacanda-Miguel3, 78)
- b. *xi waʃa-me-ʃ-ka*
 1IND sit-liquid.MID-AOR-ASS1/2
 ‘I sat in the water.’ (Pacanda-Miguel4, 192)

In (17), a passive intransitive construction, a nominal subject is not attested. In certain intransitive sentences using the passive voice a noun phrase can be found. However, this element does not function as a subject (this is discussed in section 4).

(17) Passive

wafa-me-ŋa-f-ti
sit-liquid.MID-PASS-AOR-ASS3
'One/somebody sat in the water.' (Pacanda-campana1, 29)

The example in (17) shows that: (i) the subject of an intransitive verb in passive voice is the third person singular combined with the mood *ti*; and (ii) the intransitive verb reduces its valence and becomes avalent (or impersonal): the third person combined with the assertive mood *ti* can not have any specific referent.

C. Coreference in a coordinated clauses

In (18a), the subject controls inter-clausal coreference between the subject of the first clause *nana khéri* 'the old woman' and the one of the coordinated clause, the third person included in *ti*. With zero anaphora, it thus creates a referential pivot. In (18b), a passive construction, there is a coreference between *kwhintfiti-itfa* and *kft* the subject of the coordinated clause.

(18) Transitive construction

Active

- a. *nana khéri_i tatskwa wantiku-f-ti ima ukhuri-ni ka*
woman old after kill-AOR-ASS3 DEM opossum-OBJ and
ni-ra-f-ti_i
go-FT-AOR-ASS3
'[...] then, the old woman_i killed the opossum and left_i.'
(Cocuchucho-xiwats1, 203)

Passive

- b. *tfe-ra-na-s-p-ti kwhintfiti-itfa_i*
be frightened-CAUS-PASS-AOR-PST-ASS3 person that celebrate-PL
ka ata-na-f-p-ti-kft_i
and beat-PASS-AOR-PST-ASS3-3PL
'Those at the party_i were frightened and were beaten_i.' (Zipiajo-fiesta1, 141)

In (19a), an active ditransitive construction, the subject of the first clause, *ima wáři* is coreferent with the subject of the coordinated clause, the third person included in *ti*. The same strategy of coreference is attested in (19b), a passive construction between *Selia*, the subject of the first clause and the element *ti* in the coordinated clause.

In the passive sentence (21e), the left-dislocated status of *xutfari anapu* ‘our language’ is evidenced by the following intonation break and by the adverb *yontki*, which generally occurs as the first element of a sentence. This noun phrase is coreferent with the third person included in *ti*.

(21) Passive

- e. *xo, xutfari anapu, yontki wanta-na-ʃɪn-an-ti*
 yes 1PL.POSS language before speak-PASS-HAB-PST-ASS3
 ‘Yes, our language, before, it was spoken.’ (Jaracuaro-Vida1, 91)

Focus

Purepecha has an enclitic whose function is to signal contrastive focus. Generally, the enclitic *ʃɪ*, and its host, are attracted to the initial position of the sentence. Subjects and objects can be focused. For example, in (22a), a subject *puki-ʃɪ* ‘puki’ and in (22b) an object *kurufʃa-ni-ʃɪ* ‘fish’ appear in first position. In (22c), a passive construction, the subject can be focused by the same process.

- (22) a. *Puki-ʃɪ xutfi kawayu-ni wantiku-ʃ-ti*
 Puki-FOC 1.POSS horse-OBJ kill-AOR-ASS3
 ‘Puki is the one who has killed my horse.’ (Cocucho-MariaElena1, 81)
- b. *kurufʃa-ni-ʃɪ a-ʃa-ʃ-ti*
 fish-OBJ-FOC feed-FT-AOR-ASS3
 ‘He eats FISH’ (answer to the question: what does he eat, fish or meat?)
 (Pacanda-Miguel2, 89)
- c. *xo tsɪma khoʃunta-etʃa-ʃɪ ewa-na-a-ti*
 yes DEM.PL tamal-PL-FOC take-PASS-FUT-ASS3
 Yes, these are the tamales which will be taken. (Ihuatzio-Vida1, 70)

3. Introduction of an agent in transitive and ditransitive clauses

In the preceding section it was demonstrated that in passive constructions the subject corresponds to the patient of the active transitive and the recipient/source to the corresponding ditransitive constructions. These properties are characteristic of passives traditionally classified as ‘promotional’.

The expression of the agent is generally not possible. This was the situation in the 16th century and it is the current situation in the majority of the varieties.⁵ Nevertheless, in some varieties, such as Cuanajo, Pacanda and Zipiajo, certain speakers did express an agent in this construction. Generally, they were young bilingual people with at least middle school education. The individual and particular agent is expressed by means of an oblique complement introduced by the Purepecha instrumental postposition *ximpo*⁶ (23a), the grammaticalized instrumental case marker *mpu* (24a) or through the borrowing Spanish preposition *por* (25).

- (23) a. *Maria intsku-na-s-ti ma karakata Pablu ximpo*
 Maria give-PASS-AOR-ASS3 a book Paul INST
 ‘Maria was given a book by Paul.’ (Zipiajo-Claudia1, 69)
- (24) a. *Selia ata-na-f-ti thu-mpu*
 Celia beat-PASS-AOR-ASS3 2IND-INST
 ‘Celia was beaten by you.’ (Cuanajo-Evaristo5, 82)
- (25) *tʃhanari xatsi-ku-na-f-ti ma medaya por Presidente*
 player put-3APPL-PASS-AOR-ASS3 a medal INST president
 ‘The player was awarded a medal by the president.’ (Cuanajo-Evaristo37, 302)

It is important to note that the use of *por* in this structure is more recent and less frequent than the use of the postposition *ximpo* or the case marker *mpu*.⁷

The expression of an oblique agent is quite common in passive structures in languages (Givón 1981 and this volume; Keenan 1985; Shibatani 1985).

Nevertheless, in some varieties, such as in Jaracuaro and Arantepacua, the noun phrase attested in the oblique phrase does not refer to the agent but rather to the ‘individual’ who orders the process. Therefore, even though the encoding is identical (compare 23a/23b and 24a/24b), the meaning is different:

- (23) b. *xutʃi nanti intsku-ŋa-s-ti ma kafe Pablu ximpo*
 1.POSS mother give-PASS-AOR-ASS3 a coffee Paul INST
 ‘My mother was given a coffee; Paul ordered it (but did not do it).’
 (Arantepacua-Esperanza4, 97)
- (24) b. *Selia ʃpa-me-na-f-ti tumina thu-mpu*
 Celia steal-BEN.PASS-PASS-IT-AOR-ASS3 money 2IND-INST
 ‘Celia was robbed of the money; you ordered it (but were not the agent).’
 (Jaracuaro-Alfredo24, 69)

Additionally, it may be noted that in other varieties, in Cocucho or for some speakers in Zipiajo, these structures are not possible: here the use of the instrumental is limited to express an inanimate instrument.

- (26) *Petu ata-na-s-ti tʃkhári ximpo*
 Pedro hit-PASS-AOR-ASS3 stick INST
 ‘Pedro was hit with the stick.’ (Zipiajo-Claudia6, 61)

4. Introduction of a participant in intransitive constructions with *na*

In section 2 it was demonstrated that an intransitive verb in active voice reduces its valence in the *na* construction: the subject can only be the third person singular with no specific referent. No other person or nominal subject may be used. This is an impersonal construction.

In the majority of the varieties, an intransitive construction with *na* occurs only in this context. In others, such as Jaracuaro, Zipiajo and Ihuatzio, it is possible to find a post-verbal noun phrase in such constructions.

In (27a), an active construction, a noun phrase *kawiri-etfa* ‘the drinkers’ is the subject as evidenced by (i) the correlation between this element and the assertive mood *ti* and (ii) coreference between the pronominal enclitic *kʃt* and *kawiri-etfa*. In (27b), a passive construction, the subject is the third person included in *ti*. In (27c), it is not possible to introduce the pronominal enclitic *kʃt* into the *na* construction (see above, section 2). In (27d), a passive construction, a noun phrase, here *kawiri-etfa*, can be attested after the verb but, as in (27e), it is not possible to introduce the pronominal enclitic *kʃt*. Coreference between *kawiri-etfa* and *kʃt* is not possible.

(27) Active

- a. *kawiri-etfa waʃa-ʃa-ti-kʃt*
 drinker-PL dance-PROG-ASS3-3PL
 ‘The drinkers dance.’ (Jaracuaro-rubio1, 129)

Passive

- b. *waʃa-na-ʃa-ti*
 dance-PASS-PROG-ASS3
 ‘It is danced. One dances’ (Jaracuaro-Celia2, 105)
- c. **waʃa-na-ʃa-ti-kʃt*
- d. *waʃa-na-ʃa-ti, kawiri-etfa*
 dance-PASS-PROG-ASS3 drinker-PL
 ‘There is dancing going on by some drinkers.’ (Jaracuaro-rubio1, 304)
- e. **waʃa-na-ʃa-ti-kʃt kawiri-etfa*

The difference between (27a) and (27d) is that in (27a) it is possible to identify a particular and definite participant, whereas in (27d) this is not possible. (27b) and (27d) differ in that in the latter some further specifications or information is given, i.e., that the participants are drinkers (no specific reference).

In some varieties (Comachuen and Cuanajo) the use of both noun and demonstrative is observed in the noun phrase.

- (28) a. *ata-pha-na-ſa-ti,* *ima-etſa*
 beat-RECP-PASS-PROG-ASS3 DEM-PL
 ‘One/somebody is beating, those.’ (Comachuen-Griselda2, 91)

4.1 Morphosyntactic Properties

The noun phrase *kawiri-etſa* in (27d) and the demonstrative *ima-etſa* in (28a) do not function as subjects of the verb since they do not fulfil the criteria for subjecthood established in 2.2. Let us look at the evidence:

A. Case marker

In intransitive construction with *na*, as in (27d), the noun phrase always appears without case marker. But this absence of encoding does not prove that the noun phrase functions as a subject. We also have to show that it establishes a relation with the verb. The evidence below proves that this syntactic relation does not exist.

B. Agreement between subject and the assertive mood

In (27d) and in (28a) the verb is marked by the assertive mood and the third person marker *ti*, and the noun phrase is always in the plural. It is not possible for the noun or the demonstrative to appear in the singular, cf. (27f) and (28b).

- (27) f. * *waſa-na-ſa-ti kawiri*
 b. * *ata-pha-na-ſa-ti ima*

Although the noun phrase is in the plural, it is not possible to introduce a pronominal enclitic of third person plural *kſi* in (27d, 27e, 28c). The impossibility of expressing the pronominal enclitic of third person plural *kſi* may be the consequence of its context-dependent anaphoric or deictic nature. It expresses an attested definite participant with specific reference,⁸ which is in contradiction to the nature of *na*.

- (27) d. * *waſa-na-ſa-ti-kſi*
 e. * *waſa-na-ſa-ti-kſi kawiri-etſa*
 (28) c. * *ata-pha-na-ſa-ti-kſi ima-etſa*

C. Coreference in a coordinated clause

The active intransitive clause in (29) illustrates that when two verbs are coordinated, the subject of the first clause, here *tsɨma anima-itſa*, is coreferential with the subject of the coordinated clause, here *kſi*. The nominal subject may or may not be repeated:

(29) Active

mantani wéfuṛini tsɪma anima-itʃa_i tsípi-pa-ntha-ʃɪn-ti
 each year DEM.PL soul-PL enjoy.oneself-CENTRIF-IT-HAB-ASS3

ka (tsɪma anima-itʃa_i) tere-kuṛi-pa-ntha-ʃɪn-ti-kʃi_i
 and (DEM.PL soul-PL) laugh-MID-CENTRIF-IT-HAB-ASS3-3PL

‘Each year, these souls_i went enjoying themselves, and (these souls) went_i laughing’
 (Jaracuaro-animas2, 8)

In (30a), in a passive coordinated intransitive verb, the noun phrase occurs one time, at the end of the sentence. The repetition of this noun phrase is not possible (30b).

(30) Passive

a. *khira-ru-na-ʃa-ti* *ka wera-na-ʃa-ti,*
 curl.up-street-PASS-PROG-ASS3 and cry-PASS-PROG-ASS3

wánikwa kwhiripu-itʃa
 many people-PL

‘One/somedoby sits down in the street and cries, many people.’
 (Jaracuaro-animas4, 82)

b. **khira-ru-na-ʃa-ti wánikwa ka wera-na-ʃa-ti wánikwa*

D. Constituent order

It was observed in section 2 that the unmarked constituent order in Purepecha spoken in the lake of Patzcuaro area is SVO. In intransitive clauses with *na*, the noun phrase frequently appears (83%) in a post-verbal position, cf. (27d), (28a), and (30a). Therefore, for a subject, it would show a very rare position which was defined as marked at a pragmatic level (Capistrán 2002:382). Nevertheless, in 17% of sentences as in (31), the noun phrase appears to the left of the verb.

(31) *misitu-itʃa, tepa-na-ʃa-ti*
 cat-PL be.fat-PASS-PROG-ASS3
 ‘Cats, one/someone is getting fat.’ (Ihuatzio-esposo1, 82)

Pragmatically the noun phrase which appears in the intransitive construction with *na* is a *precision phrase*. But this element does not show the same characteristics that the subject as it has been defined in section 2. Now, let us take a look at the pragmatic level in order to analyse its role.

4.2 The Pragmatic Level

In (27d, 28a, 30a) and (31), the noun phrase never refers to an identifiable, specific and definite participant. Rather, it always relates to indefinite collectives such as *ima-etʃa* ‘those’, *wánikwa* ‘many people’, *kawiri-etʃa* ‘drinkers’, *misitu-etʃa* ‘cats’. The speaker comes close to the identification of the participant but leaves it indefinite and non-referenced. Pragmatically, four relevant parameters stand out:

A. Frequency

Sentences using intransitive verbs with *na* accompanied by a noun phrase are not frequent. They are only found in oral dialogues, not in narratives. This type of construction represents 24% of sentences with intransitive verbs carrying *na*. In other words, 76% of verbs appear alone, as seen above in section 2.2.

B. Intonation contour

Generally, in (27d), (28a), and (30a), the noun phrase is presented separated from the verb by a descending intonation and a pause that may indicate a hesitation. In some varieties, such as Arantepacua, in (32) the intonation break is very long and the noun phrase is barely audible—as if the speaker wished to indicate two different sentences. Additionally, the noun phrase *watsɪ-itʃa* ‘girls’ is placed after a locative phrase *itsi-lu* ‘in the water’ whereas generally, in active clauses the subject in postposition appears after a verb and before a locative complement (cf. in 21b in the position of the locative *ifu* ‘here’). (32) shows that this noun phrase appears after a clause.

- (32) *wafsa-mi-ŋa-ʃa-ti* *itsi-lu,* // *watsɪ-itʃa*
 sit-liquid.MID-PASS-PROG-ASS3 water-LOC // girl-PL
 ‘One/somebody is sitting in the water // girls.’ (Arantepacua-Esperanza6, 91)

C. Constituent order

Independently from the unmarked SVO constituent order, the other constituent order in Purepecha sentences signals specific pragmatic characteristics (section 2). In (21b) (repeated here for convenience), the subject appears after the verb because it is not prominent, it does not provide any important information, and it is not necessary to emphasize it.

- | | | | | | |
|---------|----------------|----------------|---------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| | O | | V | | S |
| (21) b. | <i>inte-ni</i> | <i>yamintu</i> | <i>tumina</i> | <i>xwa-ʃ-p-ti-kʃɪ</i> | <i>ʃɪpapi-itiʃa ifu</i> |
| | DEM-OBJ | all | money | bring-AOR-PST-ASS3-3PL | thief-PL here |
- ‘All this money the thieves had brought it here.’ (Jaracuaro-ladron1, 310)

In intransitive passive constructions in which this noun phrase is attested, it appears in a postverbal position in 83% of all examples, as in (27d, 28a, 30a).

D. The precision phrase

The purpose of the presence of the noun phrase in the precision phrase is to close in on the identification of a participant. It provides precision in order to avoid certain pre-suppositions or to anticipate a possible disagreement. The following dialogue demonstrates the nature of the information provided by such noun phrases. The speakers—one from Jaracuaro and the other from Cuanajo—are speaking about certain customs and activities in their communities. The speaker from Cuanajo, which is also where the encounter took place, explains that people are used to walk alone in the countryside. In C1, the speaker from Cuanajo indicates that ‘one/somebody’ uses to walk alone’, without saying anything

about the identity of the participant; it has no referent. In J2, the person from Jaracuaro indicates that he understands that all people can walk alone. In C2, the speaker from Cuanajo needs to offer additional information, a specification that allows the speaker from Jaracuaro to make a good hypothesis. Thus, the speaker from Cuanajo introduces the noun phrase *atfa-itfa* ‘men’, indicating that the participant (i.e. that who walks alone) belongs to this category.

- (33) J1. *ni-ra-ʃɪn-i-kʃɪ*
go-FT-HAB-INT-3PL
‘Are they going?’ (Jaracuaro/Cuanajo-Alfredo10, 307)
- (33) C1. *ʃo ʃana-ra-koʒe-na-ʃɪn-ti*
here walk-MID-REFL-PASS-HAB-ASS3
‘Here one (usually) walks alone.’ (Jaracuaro/Cuanajo-Evaristo10, 308)
- (33) J2. *ax xo sesi*
‘Oh yes well.’ (Jaracuaro/Cuanajo-Alfredo10, 309)
- (33) C2. *kho ʃo ʃana-ra-koʒe-na-ʃɪn-ti, atfa-itfa*
yes here walk-MID-REFL-PASS-HAB-ASS3 man-PL
‘Yes, here one is used to walking alone, men.’
(Jaracuaro/Cuanajo-Evaristo10, 310)

The noun phrase *atfa-itfa* in C2 allows the speaker to avoid an error of interpretation of the other speech act participant. This noun phrase appears after a clause, but it differs from strategies already described in the literature; this is the reason why I called this noun phrase a *precision phrase*. Let us look at the evidence:

Givón (2001:267–268) described a right-dislocation strategy called *afterthought* which appears after an intonation break. Its function is to clarify or confirm the introduced participant. The referent of an afterthought is accessible, i.e. it shows coreference with a pronoun included in the sentence, as an argument of the verb. The accessibility of the referent is not attested in the precision phrase.

Queixalós (2000:436) describes a different kind of construction involved in the Sikuni passive. This construction contains a noun phrase called *programmed epiphase* which does not entail a referential re-examination of an element previously attested, as it may appear in the beginning of an oral discourse. A programmed epiphase introduces the agent of the passive. This construction allows to introduce first the relevant information and then the agent. The Sikuni programmed epiphase is similar to the one attested in Purepecha as passive. The latter, however, is limited to the intransitive construction and the introduction of the participant. The difference between programmed epiphase and the precision phrase is the clear intonation break attested in the second strategy.

The comparison between *afterthought*, *programmed epiphase* and *precision phrase* is summarized in table 1. It leads us to regard the *precision phrase* as different from the others.

	Identity of a referent	Intonation break	Coreference between the noun phrase and a pronoun
Afterthought	+	+	+
Programmed epiphase	–	?	–
Precision phrase	–	+	–

Table 1. Comparison between three right-dislocation strategies.

The *precision phrase* shows various features: (i) it occurs after a clause; (ii) it appears after an intonation break; (iii) it is not coreferential with a pronoun functioning as an argument of the verb; (iv) it is not possible to identify the referent of the participant; and (v) it gives information and precision that avoid a disagreement between speech act participants.

Notes

* Many thanks to Zarina Estrada, Thomas Givón and Francesc Queixalós for their comments and suggestions.

¹ Purepecha is classified as an isolated language, spoken by approximately 100,000 people in the state of Michoacan.

² Other moods that have only one form for all persons exist. The presence of the personal pronoun is therefore essential in these cases.

³ Word stress affects the first or second syllable; it is indicated with an acute accent on the vowel only when it appears in the first syllable (except in monosyllabic words). I use the IPA transcription: ‘ɽ’ is a retroflex, ‘x’ is a velar fricative, etc. Aspiration is indicated by ‘h’, for example ‘ph’.

Abbreviations: AOR = aorist; APPL = applicative; ASS = assertive; BEN = benefactive; CAUS = causative; CENTRIF = centrifuge; DEM = demonstrative; EVID = evidential; FOC = focus marker; FT = formative; FUT = future; GEN = genitive; HAB = habitual; IND = independent; INST = instrumental; INT = interrogative; IT = iterative; LOC = locative; MID = middle; NEG = negation; OBJ = object; PST = past; PASS = passive; PL = plural; POSS = possessive; PROG = progressive; RECP = reciprocal; REFL = reflexive

⁴ This structure is similar to the French *on*: semantically *on* refers to various individuals. However, the syntactic structure is singular: *On parle fort ici*.

⁵ There is not enough space here for the study of the geographic distribution of this construction. Yet, it should be mentioned that this feature does not allow us to establish isoglosses. The varieties in which the absence of an agent is observed are found throughout the area where Purepecha is spoken. It does, however, seem to be more frequent in the Eastern region.

⁶ In the 16th century, a postposition *ximpo* was attested. Nowadays, it can appear as *ximpo* as in 16th century or as *mpu*, a grammaticalized form. Certain varieties attest both forms. The values of this element in the 16th century and currently are: instrumental, medium, time, cause, mood, finality (animate/inanimate) and benefactive (animate). Currently, the use of an oblique agent of a passive (animate) must be added.

⁷ The preposition *por* is not frequently used in expressing the agent of a passive whereas it is well integrated into Purepecha (Chamoreau 2002):

Expression of agent:

miti-f-ti **por** *ima*
 know-AOR-ASS3 por DEM
 ‘I knew it through (because of) him.’

Expression of cause:

tsɬtsɬki urapiti kunti-kuri-ʃa-ti **por** *kwetsapikwa*
 flower white bend-REFL-PROG-ASS3 por weight
 ‘The white flower bends a lot because of the weight.’

⁸ In certain languages such as Spanish, the third person plural indicates a structure in which the agent is defined as various non-identifiable humans: *Te pegaron*. The introduction of a personal pronoun implies the identification (by anaphora or deixis) of the agent: *Ellos te pegaron*.

References

- Capistrán, A. 2002. Variaciones de orden de constituyentes en p’orhépecha. Topicalización y focalización. In P. Levy, ed.: *Del cora al maya yucateco. Estudios lingüísticos sobre algunas lenguas indígenas mexicanas*. México: UNAM. 349–402.
- Chafe, W. 1976. Givenness, contrastiveness, definiteness, subjects, topics and point of view. In C. Li, ed.: *Subject and Topic*. New York: Academic Press. 25–55.
- Chamoreau, C. 1999. Le marquage différentiel de l’objet en Purepecha. *La linguistique* 35(2). 99–114.
- Chamoreau, C. 2002. Dinámica de algunos casos en purépecha. In Z. Estrada and R. M. Ortiz Ciscomani, eds.: *VI Encuentro Internacional de Lingüística en el Noreste*. Hermosillo: Unison. 271–290.
- Chamoreau, C. 2003a. La position des personnels en purepecha. In J. Landaburu and F. Queixalós, eds.: *Mesoamérica, Caraïbe, Amazonie. Faits de Langues*. 21(2).93–106.
- Chamoreau, C. 2003b [2000]. *Grammaire du purépecha parlé sur les îles du lac de Patzcuaro (Mexique)*. Munich: Lincom Europa. (= Studies in Native American Linguistics 34).
- Chamoreau, C. 2005. Reorganización de la voz pasiva en purepecha: una visión dinámica. In C. Chamoreau and Y. Lastra, ed.: *Dinámica lingüística de las lenguas en contacto*. Hermosillo: Unison. 77–99.
- Chamoreau, C. in press. Trivalent constructions in Purepecha: a hybrid type. In F. Queixalós, ed.: *Amerindia* 31.
- Foster, M. 1969. *The Tarascan Language*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

- Friedrich, P. 1984. From Meaning to Sound. *Handbook of Middle American Indians*. 2. Austin: University of Texas Press. 56–82.
- Gilberti, M. 1987 [1558]. *Arte de la lengua de Michuacán*. Morelia: Fimax.
- Givón, T. 1981. Typology and functional domains. *Studies in Language* 5.163–193.
- Givón, T., ed. 1997. *Grammatical Relations. A Functionalist Perspective*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Givón, T. 2001. *Syntax. An Introduction*. Volume II. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Givón, T. 2002. *Bio-Linguistics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Keenan, E. 1985. Passive in the world's languages. In T. Shopen, ed.: *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, vol. I. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 243–281.
- Lagunas, J. B. de. 1983 [1574]. *Arte y Dictionario con otras obras en lengua Michuacana*. Morelia: Fimax.
- Lazard, G. 1986. Formes et fonctions du passif et de l'antipassif. *Actances* 2.7–57.
- Monzon, C. 2004. *Los morfemas de espacios del p'urhépecha*. Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán.
- Nava, F. 2004. *La voz media en p'urhépecha. Un estudio de formas y significados*. Tesis de Doctorado. México: UNAM.
- Queixalos, F. 2000. *Syntaxe sikuni*. Paris: Editions Peeters.
- Shibatani, M. 1985. Passives and related constructions: a prototype analysis. *Language* 61.821–848.
- Swadesh, M. 1969. *Elementos del tarasco antiguo*. México: UNAM.